With What Body

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With What Body

by Cadaverish

Summary

Will returns to the haunted house on the hill, he couldn't stay away if he wanted to.

Notes

Hey y'all I'm sorry this took so long and I hope you're still interested! Okay so listen I love you all and I want you to be safe so know that what will and hanni are doing here kind of smacks of an abusive relationship. Will is consenting an all but...yeah okay so. Don't read it if it's gonna trigger anything.

See the end of the work for more notes

The Ripper's house was sealed under police authority, and the local media ran riot with the story of two honor roll students found dead in the house of a serial killer.

Will felt the itch to go back to the house like a living thing under his skin.

The police chief's official statement is that they suspect a homeless person had been squatting in the empty house and had been taken by surprise by the students. There was no forensic evidence to support the presence of another person in the house, Will was sure of it. The police never explicitly admitted as much, but it was easy enough to read between the lines of the answers given in their press conference.
Price and Fred had a joint funeral that was attended by a shockingly large portion of the student body of the college. Even Bedelia came, looking no less formidable in a black wheelchair with her leg from knee to ankle in a black cast. Zeller was inconsolable and eventually he decided to file for a leave of absence and left the college at the wheel of Price's old VW van.

The last time Will had heard from Zeller, he was camping by the rim of the Grand Canyon and trying to get a job as a housekeeper for one of the lodges there.

Bedelia proposed to Alana, to which the principle public response was surprise it hadn't happened already.

Beverly took too many classes her senior year and graduated early with a double major and a stomach ulcer.

Will, for his part, did his level best to sink beneath public notice. His friends still dragged him out to make sure he was eating now and then, but they seemed to respect his desire to be left alone.
Will spent the time waiting for the media circus to die down by working on his thesis about the Chesapeake Ripper, and with a few other, less orthodox projects.

One of Will's projects was to replace the mirror he had shattered. He doubted he could match the original or the gilt frame, certainly not with his budget, but he bought a sheet of mirror from a hardware store and sealed the edges so they weren't razor sharp. The size was close to what he remembered from the dark, stifling bedroom.

Then, Will went hunting through thrift stores until he found a Ouija board that made the clerk shudder when she looked at it. Will figured that was a decent enough voucher for its efficacy. Remembering how he'd found Bedelia and Alana in the kitchen, Will also bought a huge cylinder of kitchen salt. Just in case.

Finally Will ordered a large box of candles, tall pillar candles that would take a long time to burn out and would throw a decent amount of light. He had considered an oil lamp, but every source on the paranormal he had consulted had specifically mentioned candles. He punctuated this last with a wind resistant lighter and water proof matches.

In submitting his proposal for his senior thesis, Will was counting on his criminology professor remaining as scornful of the media as she ever was, and sure enough she made no comment of him wanting to research the house where his friends had died. She seemed, instead, resigned to reading yet another wildly speculative paper on the Chesapeake Ripper. Will left her office with his pulse drumming in his ears.

Will drove by Dr. Lecter's house once every week or so until they stopped posting cops outside the old house and the crime scene seal had been removed from the door. Will gave it a few more days, both to be safe and because the new moon was coming up and it promised to be a night dark as pitch.

Will parked his car far enough off the road that no headlights from passerbys would catch on the shiny bits and wondered for the hundredth time just what he thought he was doing. It was still late afternoon and the trees were just starting to throw long shadows. It was coming towards late autumn now, not cold enough to freeze but only just, and the yard around Dr. Lecter's house was a cacophony of orange and red leaves.

Will hauled the big mirror in first and set to installing it opposite the bed. His father's drill seemed over loud in the stillness, but the gilt frame came down and the plain sheet mirror went up and Will tried not to think about it more than that. When he was done, he scrubbed it for prints.

The samurai armor in the corner was undisturbed, but the katana had been impounded for evidence. Will imagined Dr. Lecter wouldn't be happy about that. "I'll get it back for you, I'm not sure how, but I'll think of something," he told the empty room.

In the light of day, it felt much more ridiculous speaking to someone he couldn't see, but he was no longer convinced he had imagined the evening in this room. The bruises on his neck and wrists were proof enough, he'd been relegated to long sleeved turtle-necks for weeks, thank god none of the medics had noticed them when they came for Bedelia. He couldn't imagine explaining them.

Will looked around the bedroom, at the dust and the fallen plaster, and made another mental note to bring out a broom and a vacuum. Maybe something to clean the windows, those that remained.

Will returned to the office then, and set to rifling through the books, determined to do some actual research for his thesis. The shadows got longer and longer as Will went on, until he was forced to go back to his car for the candles. He set up a line of them on the desk, each candle set on a small, chipped saucer to keep the wax from staining the wood, and kept another for himself, working to keep the light close enough to the books to see but not so close as to risk a fire.

Will was beginning to suspect that Lecter would not appear after all, and pulled out his phone to check the time. The clock read 1:25, and then went dark. Will tried every trick he knew to turn the phone back on, but it remained dark. The battery had read 72%, it had no reason to be dying now. Will looked up, feeling his breath begin to speed.

A gust of wind drifted in from the large picture windows, making the curtains billow and the candles flicker. Will shivered, although he was wearing a wool jacket and the wind didn't really touch him. He looked hard at his faint reflection in the windows, but saw only himself. Something fell onto the balcony above him and Will jumped.

Rising to his feet, Will moved to the center of the room. He hadn't even known there was anything on the upper level, could barely see the railing around the balcony at all by the faint light of his candle. He saw the gap in the railing where a ladder would have been, but couldn't remember ever seeing a ladder during that terrifying night with everyone else in the house. "Alright," he said to the room, "give me a second."

Will was around six foot, and could just reach the bottom edge of the balcony from the floor. So he fetched one of the chairs from the center of the room and set it beneath the gap in the railing and climbed up onto it. With this additional height, he could hook his fingers onto the wooden edge of the balcony, and just feel the carpet beyond. He jackknifed his body, pulling hard to haul himself up and not trusting the rungs on the balcony to hold his weight. He managed to get an elbow up over the balcony and then wedged the edge of his boot into the plaster scrolling around the bottom edge.

Finally, he sat on the balcony, looking down over the office. He wondered if he could get down the way he came. He had brought a candle and the lighter in his jacket and he lit the candle now. The thing that had fallen above him was apparent now, a slim black journal lay on the floor.

Will bent to pick it up and another fell from a different shelf around the corner. He jumped again, not as badly but a flush lit up his cheeks all the same. He picked up the second journal and went Dr. Lecter didn't offer anything else, he tossed them from the balcony so they landed flat on the floor, blew out the candle, and scrambled down from the balcony, landing gracelessly in the chair.
The journals were written in a precise, masculine hand in neat cursive. Will settled into read by the light of the candles, his chair pulled up to the edge of the desk.

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August 12, 1945
I have joined a battalion of American soldiers on their return home. Now is as good a time as any to begin remembering my English. They have each sworn they will not give me away as a Lithuanian, and I have certainly stitched up enough of them to believe it. If nothing else, I have a vigorous advocate in the person of Corporal Tier.
For his part, Cpl. Tier has promised to visit my office once I have figured out where it will be, and he has beseeched me to live close to the city of Baltimore where he has an offer of employment. I have been assured by the other soldiers that Baltimore is home to many immigrants so that, even if the Americans don't feel kindly towards me, I will not stick out.
I worry that Cpl. Tier will have significant difficulties adjusting to civilian life. He takes such joy from the battlefield.

Will wondered if the other journals upstairs were in Lithuanian. How much did Dr. Lecter write down? And why hadn't anyone found these journals beforehand. He read through

August and September, disappointed that most of it was devoted to daily trivialities.

September 30, 1945
I have spent a significant amount of money to expedite my naturalization into this country. A part of me misses the quiet forests of Lithuania, but I have real no cause to as I have not seen them for many years. Just one more thing the soviets took from me.
Baltimore is, in actuality, noisier than Paris. I had not thought it possible. I have spent the past month living in a boarding house and have there learned far too much about the neighbors who came and gone from the rooms on either side of me. I need to find a place of my own, preferably one with a functional kitchen.
My office, for the time being, rubs shoulders with the office of a salesman. Each and every day he leaves his office at exactly five P.M. and every day he is certain to send me a look he feels confident will convey his contempt for me. I am becoming rather tired of his attitude. Only yesterday as one of my patients was leaving, he purposefully knocked into her, then looked through the window in the door at me.
I should throw a dinner party when I find a new house.

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"Risky," Will said to the empty office, he knew exactly what Lecter meant when he said he wanted to throw a "dinner party". Wind whistled through the room and the curls at the back of Will's neck prickled with the chill. Will looked up, smiling, anticipating something further from the doctor and was shocked to find dawn was approaching.

All at once Will was overtaken by a jaw-cracking yawn and his eyes felt dry and heavy. "Thanks," Will said the empty office, holding up the journals, and he shuffled out to his car to drive back to the apartment. When he got back, however, and lay down in his narrow bed, he found he couldn't sleep. The journals were a profoundly useful gift for his thesis but he had wanted-

What had he wanted? Will shifted against the bedsheets and felt his cock twitch. He knew what he wanted. He wanted that hot touch on his chest again, the cold breath in his ear and he wanted the sharp teeth at his neck. How many people had those teeth torn up, he wondered, and slipped his hand down to curl around his cock.

The journals were on Will's bedside table and he picked up the one he had begun reading, cracking the spine. He wondered what Lecter had smelled like in life. He buried his nose in the spine of the book but smelled only the old pages and the faint sharpness of ink. Maybe this was what Lecter smelled like, he thought all of a sudden, like paper and ink.

Will sped his hand up, fingering the slit in the head of his cock and biting his lip hard to stay quiet. He was a cook too, Will thought, he would smell like spices. And, whispered a little voice in the back of his head, like cooking meat.

Will was close, so close, but he couldn't quite tip himself over the edge. Impulsively, he let the journal fall open on his chest and brought his free hand to wrap around his own throat, just tightly enough that the edges of his vision went dark.

He came, hard.

Shaking, Will set the journal back on his bedside table after making sure none of the pages were creased, and then he rolled over with a sigh and slept dreamlessly.

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Will rose late in the day and shuffled out to the shared kitchen in search of food, not bothering to throw on anything besides his boxers and a t-shirt. Alana and Bedelia were curled around each other on the couch watching something inane on Alana's laptop.

"Late night?" Bedelia asked him.

"Yup," Will replied shortly, fishing around for a clean bowl and a box of untainted cereal, free of Alana's Frankenstein-like combinations of various brand names in the same container. "Working on your thesis?" Bedelia persisted, she was staring hard at his back, Will could feel the skin between his shoulder blades prickling from her attention.

He spun, sitting sideways in the chair and holding the bowl of cereal on his lap. "Reading." He replied, shortly. Alana looked between the two of them with a confused expression. Bedelia held his gaze for a few more beats before tucking her face against Alana's neck and kissing her fiancée behind her ear. Alana giggled and the mood was broken. Will turned back to his cereal.
It was Friday, he thought. He could finish up the journals today and go back to the house tonight.

Bedelia watched him as he rinsed out his bowl and set it to dry. She went right on watching him as he padded back to his bedroom and shut the door. Will locked the door and tried not to think about why.
The journals were just as he had left them and Will resumed where he had left off.

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October 8, 1945
I have found a house that suits me at last. It is in the Queen Anne style, two stories with a basement and an attic. I have a plan to divide the basement, to better suit the storage of my medical equipment, and have found a contractor who has assured me he can complete the work while I live there.
I will move in tomorrow. It is a stately house but its prior owners had distinctly American tastes, which is to say "none".
I have begun to acquire regular clients and the bulk of them have assured me that I am worth the drive out of town. Cpl. Tier, even, has promised me that he has a friend in the area and can catch a ride to see me. He has begun to work at the shipyards per his sergeant's recommendation. The physical labor is good for his post war recovery, but he seems increasingly tense with each successive appointment.
I wonder when he will snap.

October 17, 1945
Cpl. Tier came to me in tears, his first appointment in the new house. He told me that he had gotten into an argument with one of the other dock hands. He described picking up a fallen pipe and striking the man across the head, putting down the pipe, and scratching at the man

with his fingernails. I asked to see his hands and he had torn away the first and third nails on his left hand and the first and second on his right.
I asked him to wait, and retrieved some bandages and wrapped up his hands.
I asked what had happened to the body, and he started to sob again, but managed to get out that the dockhand had fallen into the water and Cpl. Tier had not seen him rise. He told me his superior had assumed the man had skipped town, apparently he had been engaged in an epistolary romance with a young lady in California and had dreams of moving there.
I asked Tier why he was crying, since he wasn't going to be found out. I asked if he felt guilty. Tier looked at me with his round eyes, soft brown irises better suited to a puppy than to a man, and told me that he was crying because he hadn't finished hitting the man when he'd fallen in.

November 2, 1945
I have made two new friends. At a production of Turandot I had the good fortune to be seated next to a lovely young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Park. Mrs. Gregory Park remarked that my accent was "queer, but charming in a thuggish way" and she kindly congratulated me on overcoming my background.
I told her that I had been lucky in working with American doctors while overseas during the war. In truth, I was glad to meet many of them and to teach them the European techniques America had yet to pick up on. Mrs. Gregory Park assumed that they had been teaching me, and said that she was glad I had access to American resources after being "stuck so long without". She told me that when she gave Gregory his first son, and she was sure it would be soon, she would be confident entrusting the boy to my care since I had received such fine training during the war.
When I throw my dinner party, I shall be sure to invite them.

November 11, 1945
Cpl. Tier brought me a book on natural history today. He asked me if I had ever heard of Cave Bears and when I told him that I had, he asked me what I assumed the crushing power of its jaws might have been.
I reminded him that I was not a vet, nor was I an expert in non-human biomechanics, but I had read that a Grizzly Bear such as he might find today in the western states had a bite strength of 1200 pounds per square inch. I speculated that as Cave Bears had a broader jaw and a wider head with more room for muscle beds to attach, a Cave Bear might be even stronger than a Grizzly.
He seemed electrified by this news, nearly vibrating in his seat. He asked me what the bite strength of a human was, and I told him that a male might have a bite of around 175 pounds per square inch. He stood up, and paced around my office. After a few laps, he came to stop before the large windows and massaged his jaw, looking disappointed.
He asked me if that was enough to crush a bone and I replied that it was not.
The rest of the hour was given over to Cpl. Tier staring out of the window silently. As he left, I told him that the museum probably had some samples of Cave Bear skeletons if he wanted to see them, and that seemed to cheer him somewhat.

November 18, 1945
Cpl. Tier insisted on wearing a Cave Bear skull over his face for his hour today and would not tell me where he had got it. He had tucked bits of wood into the bandages around his missing fingers, I assumed to better emulate claws.

I asked him if he intended to sleep through the winter and he said he might. He said it would be important to eat well and store up meat if he wanted to sleep so much.

November 29, 1945
The basement is done. It is time to throw a party, I think.

December 7, 1945
My party has gone better than I could have hoped. I planned it for a Friday, but I had anticipated several of my new acquaintances begging off lest they be heard to socialize with a European so soon after the war, and everyone I invited attended.
Cpl. Tier indulged us by not wearing his skull, though he insisted on keeping the bits of metal serving as claws in his wraps. I told the other guests that they were splints for a fractured finger and he didn't correct me.
Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Park were especially hungry and ate well, clearing their plates after each of the five courses.
Mrs. Colby, recently widowed, told me that her late husband had enjoyed French food enormously and eating my cooking had reminded her of him powerfully. I told her, discretely, that if she wanted to talk more about him, she could meet me during office hours.
Mr. Mason Verger, however, managed to overhear us talking and approached me as the others were leaving, asking if he might bring his sister by for treatment. He said he'd never heard of a doctor who specialized in mental and emotional sickness and I assured him I would be delighted to meet her. I wonder if she will be anything like him.

December 19, 1945
Today I was attacked. Three men accosted me outside of my butcher's shop, apparently having taken offense to my way of pronouncing the letter "v". They told me they were concerned that I was a Nazi who had escaped conviction, and punctuated this sentiment with strikes about my head and shoulders.
I defended myself and am confident they will not trouble me any longer, but the meat from the butcher was ruined.
Thankfully, I have found a new supply.

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The journal ended there, and flipping open the next Will found it began in January of 1946. Outside, the sun was setting and Will realized he would not have time to finish the second journal before returning to Dr. Lecter's house. He wondered if Dr. Lecter would be angry with him, but decided he'd risk it, he had to go back.

Tucking the journals under his arm, Will poked his head out of his room and looked around quickly, and didn't see Bedelia anywhere so he grabbed the broom and dust pan from the hall closet and skittered from the apartment and down to his car.

Will left the broom in the car because dark had fallen properly when he arrived at the empty house. He lit one of his candles on the porch and, feeling a little awkward, knocked on the front door. He went to open the door immediately after, but it swung open on its own. Will looked around the foyer, but he saw no trace of Dr. Lecter, or anybody else. He shut the door gently behind him and made his way to the office.

Setting the candle on the desk, he found his chair had been returned to the center of the room so he dragged it back to the place under the railing. He really needed to buy a ladder and bring it, but he didn't know where to find a wooden ladder and he thought an aluminum one would look out of place.

Will hitched himself up and returned the journal. Nothing else fell from the bookshelves and Will hadn't thought to bring another candle with him to read the spines, so he went back to the railing and said an awkward "thank you," to the darkness below. He stayed on the balcony for a moment longer, looking at the shapes of the trees outside.

Thinking of the journal, Will sat at the edge of the balcony and pulled out his phone which, unusually, was receiving three full bars of cell signal. He pulled up his browser and searched for Gregory Park in Baltimore. He found a few news stories stretching well into the 80s.

"You never killed the Parks," Will observed to the office, "even after they were such dicks."

The office was silent.

"I haven't read the second journal yet," he confessed quietly, "but Corporal Tier killed more people, didn't he."

He bit his lips and then scooted forward to get the edge of the balcony and swing down, but in the dark Will misjudged the distance and slipped and fell from the balcony. He tried to relax himself for the landing to minimize the damage but he knew it wouldn't be pretty. The image of Bedelia's slick white bone poking out through her leg burned in his mind.

He didn't hit the edge of the chair or the floor, instead he was caught. Arms were under his legs and his back and they burned like brands, even through his clothing. Will instinctively glanced at the big picture windows and saw himself floating in the air, but behind him he caught the faint silhouette of broad shoulders.

Wind whistled through the room and the dim candle light abruptly got dimmer, and out of the corner of his eye it seemed to Will that the flame burned blue.

All at once, the pressure under his legs and shoulders disappeared and he dropped with a faint whumph into the arm chair. "Thanks," he breathed, trying hard not to sound like a damsel and failing completely.

He sat in the chair, feeling stunned and then said "it was punishment enough to feed the Parks your food, wasn't it?" He smiled, feeling the rightness of his conclusion settle into his chest, and rose to his feet, barely aware of what he was doing, and walked to the kitchen completely forgetting his candle.

Will moved to the counter and leaned on the edge of it. It felt a little off and he realized he was supposed to be taller, he was supposed to feel more strength in his shoulders when he put his weight on them. Will looked towards the pantry and saw the open door leading down to the hidden basement and felt a smile curl his lips.

He strode to it, and walked down the stairs. Without even the windows, the darkness was complete but Will knew the way and he moved with confidence. His feet his cement and Will felt himself walking forward, all the way to the metal table. Fred Chilton had died there.

Abruptly Will was himself again. He was cold, he felt a little scared, and he couldn't see his own hands.

"Are you going to kill me, Dr. Lecter?" he asked with a small, shaky voice.

Will gripped the edge of the table feeling his knees start to tremble. It was so dark he couldn't even see the stairs he had come down. He had left his only candle in the office. It was a long time until dawn.
Dr. Lecter had won, he realized, he'd been taken hold of and moved right down to the basement where he would die. He didn't feel relief so much as he felt comforted by his certainty.

Will turned around and hitched himself up onto the table. He swung his legs around and lay down, fully supine, exactly as they had found Fred and his bloody stomach. His breathing was deep, fast and erratic as he waited for the knife to fall, but he kept his eyes locked upwards towards the ceiling.

"They loved it," Will gasped around his own thudding heart "they couldn't get enough of it. The Parks. But they never knew what you were feeding them." Will couldn't stop his hands from fidgeting, wrapping around the edges of the table and squeezing until the metal cut into his joints.

"Randall didn't know, either, at the first dinner. Corporal Tier, I mean. He wanted to be like you but he couldn't be, he didn't understand like you did. I bet you stopped inviting him when he started to get an ego about it."

Will licked his lips. His stomach was tingling with the anticipation of that deep cut that would expose his intestines, soak him with his own blood.

"You wanted someone to understand, didn't you," Will asked, "and Corporal Tier wasn't even human. He couldn't understand. I bet you killed him, in the end." He heaved a sigh. The edge of anticipation was starting to blunt.

Will felt a hand on his belly, on the softness just below his navel. His pulse spiked again, his chest was shaking with the force of his heartbeat. He breathed through his nose and when that was too loud, he let his mouth fall open and panted.

Will's shirt slid up his body slowly. It was so slow, and it felt oddly gentle.

"I'm glad I met you," his voice was urgent, desperate to convey the truth of sentiment. "Even if I didn't last, I'm glad I met you."

Will felt a cold touch on his belly, and waited for it to sharpen, but instead it resolved into the shape of lips, mouthing at his skin. The hands gripped his hips, holding him still as the mouth

lipped at the rim of his belly button, and then slid down, kissing at the dip between bone and muscle, and then where the course denim of his jeans met his flesh.

The barest pinch of teeth squeeze the skin over his left hip, and then all of a sudden, fire erupted in the skin there and Will couldn't stop his back from arching up off the table. He became aware of a person screaming, and then realized that it was him.

He felt a tongue lapping at the wound on his hip. Distantly, he felt blood welling between his fingers and dripping to the floor, he must have grabbed the table so hard his flesh yielded to the pressure.

A mouth pressed against Will's lips and he tasted copper and something cold and chalky. He felt a hand petting his hair.

Then the presence was gone.

Will lay there in the basement until his hands started to really hurt and the ache from his hip started shooting hot bolts down his thigh in time with his heartbeat. Slowly, he rolled onto his side and kicked himself off the table, making sure to pivot on his uninjured hip. His legs hit the floor and he almost collapsed, they felt weak and trembled erratically under him.

Will clung to the table until he could get them to cooperate. He found his way to the wall, and leaned hard against it until he could make it to the stairwell.

When he made it up to the kitchen, Will saw the sun had come up and he blinked his eyes as his pupils adjusted, tucking his face into his shoulder while his hands clung to the pantry shelving.

He made his way into the office, blew out his abandoned candle, and felt too tired to take another step. He sat down in his chair, tipped his head back, and fell fast asleep.

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Will woke because of the cold.

It was an unseasonably chilly day for November in Baltimore and Will's hands were stiff and slow. He brought them to his mouth, and blew on them until they felt cooperative.

He judged it was about late morning, and checking his phone he saw it was more like early afternoon. He would've been happy to stay and work on cleaning up the house a bit, but he needed to pee and had no faith in the septic system after so long abandoned.

Resigned, Will limped to his car and drove back to campus.

In the apartment bathroom, Will started the shower to try to regain the warmth in his limbs and shucked his pants. In the bright light, Will got a clear look at his hip and saw a perfect bite mark, each tooth clearly defined, stood out around his hip bone.

He felt the mark, and it smarted under his touch, but it was the kind of hurt reminiscent of a baby tooth coming out and Will couldn't stop messing with it.

Will stared at the mark in the shower. Growing up, Will's father had hosted frequent barbeques with other men who frequented the boat yard. One of them had been a tattoo artist and Will remembered the man had a carefully crosshatched pattern from shoulder to elbow on both arms. Will had asked him what kind of ink had made the pattern and the man had told him that it wasn't a tattoo, it was a scar and that he had made it stand out by rubbing sesame oil into it. Will remembered standing on a chair and running his chubby little fingers over the scars and feeling the bump bump of each one.

Will washed the bite and patted it dry with toilet paper in lieu of a paper towel, and wrapped a towel around his waist to return to the bedroom. He changed his clothes and scrubbed the towel through his hair before hanging it back up in the bathroom and leaving the apartment again.

At the grocery store, he bought window cleaner, a roll of paper towels, bandages and sesame oil.

When Will drove back to Dr. Lecter's house, the late night was starting to wear on him and a headache throbbed dull and low behind the bridge of his nose and deep in his eyes. Still, he took himself to the downstairs bathroom, just off the office, and stood so that the light from the office windows lit his hip in the mirror. Will rubbed in the sesame oil, bandaged the bite, and then washed the mirror carefully.

He spent the rest of the afternoon sweeping up the cracked tile from the downstairs and making a mental catalogue of all the work he'd have to do to restore the house. If Dr. Lecter agreed, of course.

The shadows were starting to lengthen when Will sat down in his chair in the office, lit a few candles pre-emptively, and cracked open the second journal Dr. Lecter had given him.

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February 3, 1946
Mr. Verger brought his sister by today: Ms. Margot Verger. He says she has been moody and unsociable, preferring to linger in her room or out in the stables with the horses.
She was terse with me, answering my questions with a few syllables as possible until she felt confident that I wasn't an agent for her brother. Then she became very informative indeed.
I learned that her brother is less man than monster. He is well known in the city, his family is very wealthy from raising pigs and his father's money has kept him in good stead with the politicians. I don't know how to help Ms. Verger.

February 11, 1946
Cpl. Tier came back today. He seemed at peace, and sat in his chair calmly with his hands folded in his lap. He wasn't wearing his skull, but I noticed a silver chain was around his neck. I wondered how much of his meager salary he had paid for that, or if he had bothered to pay at all. Noticing my gaze, he pulled the chain from his shirt and showed me a sleek white bone hanging from the end of it. I didn't ask if it was human or bear and he didn't offer, but it did look rather too small for a bear.
He thanked me for my help, but told me he was feeling much better now. He promised to

recommend me to his friends. I poured him a glass of wine as a celebration for his recovery and he left.

February 25, 1946
Ms. Verger returned today with a vivid bruise dripping from her temple and pooling violet in her eye socket. She told me that she had been over social at a dinner party her brother had thrown. Mr. Mason Verger stands to gain quite a bit of money provided she never bears an heir. He himself had been quite adamant that he would not marry.
Ms. Verger told me that despite his tyranny, she had a sweetheart in Connecticut who had worked as a nurse during the war. I asked why Ms. Verger didn't go to him, and she told me quietly that they could have no child and would not live comfortably. The inheritance wouldn't go to her if she bore a son out of wedlock.
I asked her why she didn't marry somebody understanding and she stared out the window for awhile. Finally she said that it wouldn't be fair. I am utterly sympathetic to the sentiment.

March 3, 1946
I threw another dinner party today. I invited Cpl. Tier, for old time's sake, but he sent another young man in his place. Lt. Cpt. Brown, a tall young man with clever eyes and an uncertain smile.
Mrs. Gregory Park informed me, and everyone she met, that she was gloriously pregnant and was certain it would be a son. Ms. Verger was in attendance and sought refuge in the kitchen with me. Mr. Verger removed her near immediately, shooting me a roguish wink and telling me I mustn't get ideas. I will find a way to have a quiet dinner with Ms. Verger, she deserves that much at least.
A woman I met at the opera, who went by Coco since her last name Komeda was rather out of fashion after the war, delighted everyone with her sparkling conversation. She and Mrs. Colby have bonded as war widows. They thanked me for throwing such delightful parties and I cut them another slice of pork.
An especially delicious pork, even Mr. Verger agreed, it had been harvested from a young and athletic pig.

March 12, 1946
Ms. Verger told me about a group of visiting school children who came to learn about pig farming.
I need to go to the butcher.

March 22, 1946
Lt. Cpt. Brown came to see me today. He told me that he was a bigger believer in God than he was in the science of psychology, but Cpl. Tier had seemed so much improved that he had to try me.
I asked him what the trouble was.
He told me that he went to his church every morning and every night, but he went on dreaming about the war. I told him there had been good work done on the symbolism in recurring dreams, and encouraged him to write a dream journal.

I have no idea if he'll be back.

-x-

Dusk had fallen and Will squinted harder at the journal with each successive entry. Wind whistled through the room and the candle flared, blue light spilled across the yellowed pages. Will looked up. The strain of staring into the gloom sent a bolt of fire through his eyes and he winced, squeezing his eyes shut.

Will felt a tug on the hand not holding the journal and looked up but there was nobody there. His hand was tugged again so he shut the journal and stood. His hand felt as if it were inches from scalding water each time he was pulled along, but his breath fogged in front of his eyes.

He was lead up the stairs and into the master bedroom. The hand pulled him past the mirror to the far side of the bed and as he passed Will caught the faint profile of a face: high cheekbones, straight nose, a deeply indented chin.

He crossed to the bed and hands on his shoulders sat him down and Will obligingly lay flat out on the bed. A hot hand settled across his eyes and he moaned aloud as the warmth seeped into him. Will's hands reached for the arm but passed through nothing. Will shut his eyes and reached again, and felt the arm beneath a soft shirting fabric. He ran his hands over the muscled forearm in a daze.
Dr. Lecter petted his hair, and Will listened to the sound of the wind in the trees and his own curls ruffling against the pillowcase.

-x-

Will woke suddenly, he had no memory of falling asleep. He had been tucked beneath the covers and at some point his jeans and jacket had come off. He thought he had kicked them off as he slept until he spotted them neatly folded on a chair in the corner of the room. He noticed that the bookshelf that had broken Bedelia's leg was standing upright and a number of books had appeared on the shelves. He remembered it being empty on his first visit.

It was morning, and Will's headache had gone entirely. Getting up out of the bed, he saw a fresh bandage had been smoothed over his hip. He touched it with his fingers and felt only a dull ache from the bite.
Will got dressed and made the bed. Then he made his way to his car and fished around until he found a notebook and tore out a spare page. On the page he drafted a quick note: "would you like me to replace the windows and the broken tiles?" and he left the note in the middle of the desk.

Will drove back to campus, and spent the day in the library doing his homework. Bedelia set a cup of coffee in front of him and Will shifted his bag with the journal inside further under his chair. "Were you here all night?" Bedelia asked him. "Yup," Will grunted, not looking up from his laptop.

"Working on your thesis?"

"No, homework."

"Alana and I found a dog show on TV last night," Bedelia was looking at him hard, he could feel it. Will managed to meet her eyes exactly once before ducking over his laptop again. "A corgi won," she persisted, drumming black painted nails on the table.

“Corgis are cute,” Will offered, unsure what would make her stop staring.

“You should hang out with us soon, we miss you.” Bedelia told him then stood up again.

“You can stay, if you want,” Will said in a rush, meeting her eyes. Abruptly he remembered all the evenings they had spent at this exact table reading terribly written text books and journal articles, consuming frankly irresponsible quantities of caffeine, or laughing at their essay titles.

Bedelia gave him a small smile that in no way matched the size of the relief he saw in her eyes. She folded herself into the chair across from him and produced a paperback. Will squinted to see the cover.

“I Survived a Cult?”

“Yeah. It’s about this girl who got sucked into a satanic cult in high school. Took three different deprogrammers working together to help her shake it.” Bedelia went right on reading as she spoke.
“Isn’t deprogramming supposed to be hugely unethical?” Will asked doubtfully.

“Well now we know that, sure, but this was the eighties,” Bedelia turned a page, Will didn’t know how she could read one thing and talk about another at the same time but she was a master. It drove her professors mad.

Will was halfway into an article about recidivism in urban communities when Bedelia spoke again, “she blames her abusive relationship beforehand for making her so susceptible to brainwashing” Bedelia turned another page, “the book claims abusers and cults use the same tactics to keep someone under their thumb.”

Will raised his eyebrows, “well they do, right? I mean, you and Alana are the experts but,”

“No, I think there’s definite similarities,” Bedelia agreed and then met his gaze over her book like she was waiting for him to continue. Will went back to his article. \

-x-

Will got through the week of school by thinking about the house. He wondered if Dr. Lecter would reply to his note. His father had been quite the handyman while he was alive, Will was confident that he could repair the windows and the floor if the doctor permitted.

His bite had healed gorgeously, raised above the skin around it and clearly defined. Will found himself resting his hand on it when he got nervous or uncomfortable like a touchstone.

Will packed his car on Wednesday night and didn’t even stop at his room after class Thursday before climbing into his car and driving back up the hill out of town to the house hidden amidst the trees. The semester would be over in a few weeks and Will wouldn’t necessarily ever have to leave the house, unless Dr. Lecter got sick of him, except for food and supplies.

Will knocked and waited a few seconds before letting himself into the hallway. He was hit by a smell as he stood in the foyer and closed his eyes to try to determine what it was.

Something woody, he thought, maybe sandal wood or cedar, and moist earth.

Will leaned his backpack against the wall and went to the office looking for his note. The desk was bare, and Will supposed the wind had blown the paper away but it was nowhere to be seen. Will took it as a sign that Dr. Lecter didn't want him messing with the hard structure of the house.

He took a perfunctory walk through the lower level of the house, checking on its condition, and saw the dining room in the light of day for the first time. It was done in dark colors, a long table was there in, thankfully, good condition. Most notable were the planters that lined the wall opposing the windows, Will's brain belatedly made the connection between them and the soil he smelled whenever he moved through the house after dark. The soil was pale and malnourished, dry and dusty. Will crumbled a bit of it between his fingers feeling something like pity for whatever once grew here. Will didn't know much about gardening but that was what google was for and Will made a mental note to ask Dr. Lecter if he wanted them replanted.

Continuing through to the kitchen, Will abruptly realized that the knife that had been buried in the cutting board was nowhere to be seen, the gaping black wound in the wood the only evidence it had ever been there. The doors to the pantry had been neatly closed, and Will didn't think he would be thanked for opening it up again.

Drifting back through a sitting room and down the hall to the office again, Will came back to where he had started at the foot of the wide staircase and followed it up to the second floor. He hadn't had a chance to explore up here yet and Will gently nudged open the rooms he had not seen, finding two lavishly appointed if slightly musty and moth eaten bedroom with attached baths and a linen closet. The carpet in the hall was in good shape for all the dust that gave it a pale sheen, but the carpets in the guest rooms were patching badly and they went on Will's mental list.

At the other end of the hallway was Dr. Lecter's bedroom and Will impulsively knocked before he eased the door open. The mirror he had installed was immaculate, save for a set of finger prints that were certainly not Will's on the extreme right edge. Will stared at them for a long time, wondering if anyone had fingerprinted Dr. Lecter before they entombed the body, and if they had, how he might look at the record to compare. The mirror shared the wall with the door to the bathroom and Will stuck his head in. The mirror here had been broken and the shower head and faucets were missing, leaving staring black holes in the walls.

Turning back to the bedroom, Will suddenly saw a piece of paper on the night stand, folded in half and stood up like a tent on its edges. Crossing to the table, he unfolded the paper and read, in his own hand, his query about the windows and tiles. Beneath, in a neat cursive Will recognized from the journals, was written the word "Yes." Will stared at the word for a long time before he came back to himself.

Will traipsed back downstairs and took out his phone, and did another lap of the downstairs taking picture after picture of the places where the windows were broken and the tiles were broken or missing. Then he found his father's old tape measure and measured the places, jotting down the figures in his phone.

There was still daylight when he'd finished, so Will lit his collection of candles on their old plates and set them on the desk in the office and settled in for another round of journal entries.

-x-

April 21, 1946
Lt. Cpt. Brown has returned and with him he has brought a long series of napkins from the diner nearest his apartment, upon which he has written out his dream journal.
For all he claimed he dreamed of the war, I read page after page of crucifixions. Sometimes his own, sometimes other people he knew or strangers, sometimes his god. I asked him if he felt he should be punished or if he felt other people should be punished. He got a strange look in his eye and didn't answer, but left immediately. He forgot his coat and I have no idea where to send it. I hung it in the closet and put his journal in a postal envelope for safe keeping.

April 24, 1946
Ms. Verger came to visit me today. Instead of therapy, I offered her high tea on the porch. We did not speak of her brother once.

April 30, 1946
Mrs. Colby came by today. She related to me the story of her neighbors, who had recently gone camping and after some days missing, been found dead. She told me the police had reported it was an animal attack, but her nephew, who works with them, had confided in her that they had been confounded by the size of the bites.
They were at least the size of a bear, she told me, and her neighbors had not been camping in bear country.

May 13, 1946
Lt. Cpt. Brown has returned today. I observed he was favoring his right leg and he told me he had bound his left with barbed wire, after a certain sect of Christian monks.
I asked him if his dreams had abated, and he told me they had slowed, but not stopped altogether. I asked if he felt something was missing and he nodded, silently, and chewed on his knuckles. He looked almost frightened, though not of me, as if he saw something reflected in me.
He suffers beautifully, I wish I could be more concerned with infection, the world would be a lesser place without him in it.

-x-

Will frowned, wondering who Lt. Cpt. Brown was to the Dr. Lecter of 1946, and thumbed through the journal, looking for the next appearance of his name. Abruptly, the candles on the desk blew out as if a gust of wind had just come through the room, but if it had Will hadn't felt it. One candle, a tall taper candle, remained burning, but the flame had gone a peculiar sickly blue. Will stared at it, and the plate it was on began to slip across the desk with a grinding noise that seemed deafening in the silent house. The plate kept on moving to the edge of the desk and Will held out a hand to catch it, but it slipped off the wood into the empty air without dropping, suspended with nothing beneath it but darkness.

Standing, Will followed the candle as it bobbed sluggishly upwards to chest height and drifted from the room. Up the stairs the candle went, Will trailing behind like an afterthought. The candle bumped against the hallway and twice dropped alarmingly towards the floor, but inexorably it continued into Dr. Lecter's bedroom and perched itself on the end table closest to the door.

Will followed, and sat on the bed, hoping he was reading what the doctor wanted correctly. The flame flickered back to orange and in the brighter light, Will saw his shirt begin to drift upwards, showing the bite on his hip and then the muscles of his stomach, and his staring ribs. Raising his hands obediently, Will felt his shirt lift off him entirely. He shivered in the chilly room.

Something moved in the corner of his vision and Will whipped his head towards the mirror. In it he saw himself, but in front of him was a half nude man with a broad barrel chest and dark blonde hair that drifted over his eyes. "It's you," Will breathed aloud and his breath fogged where Dr. Lecter's body would be. The doctor turned towards the mirror and smiled at Will when their eyes met in the glass. Holding eye contact, Lecter slid his hands over his own chest, through his curling chest hair, and over his tapered waist before they came to rest on the hemline of his trousers. Will's mouth felt suddenly and utterly dry. Slowly, Lecter worked his thumbs into the waistband and slid them to his hip bones and then back to the center. Will noticed his own face, gaping like a gutted fish, and looking back to Lecter saw his pale eyebrows raised as if in question.

Will bit his lips, but his hands went to his own jeans without shaking and popped the button through the hole. In the mirror, Lecter did the same to his trousers, Will slid down the zipper of his fly and Lecter did the same. The light by the single candle was dim, but enough for Will to make out that he was the only one of them wearing any underwear. Running out of patience, he stood and shoved off his jeans and boxer-briefs, and craned his head towards the mirror, only to be shoved back onto the bed by two invisible hands on his chest.

Staring into the mirror, Will saw Lecter lift his bare legs and spin him on the coverlet so he was facing the headboard, the doctor's back was as well muscled as his front and Will couldn't help but breath out a quiet "damn." Lecter looked over his own shoulder into the mirror so Will could see his chastising smirk, then flipped Will bodily onto his stomach so all he could see was pillow.

Will gripped the headboard reflexively but he felt hands slide up his body starting from the meat of his ass, over the broad muscles in his back, cresting his deltoids and up his arms to wrap firmly over his hands. Will knew a command when he felt one even if it wasn't voiced, and tightened his grip on the wood. To his right, Will heard a soft creek and twisted his head on the pillow. The closet doors stood open and a black bag lay just before him. Will felt the form of a hand over his eyes though he could see through it perfectly well, and obligingly shut his eyes. He heard another creek as the door shut again and a minute later a soft whumph on the table beside him.

He cracked his eyes again and the black bag gaped open on the end table, and a scalpel blade glinted beside it. Will stared at it for a few harsh thuds of his heart, then he very deliberately shut his eyes and turned his head away. Lecter's hands returned to his back, sliding firmly

over him and his shivered at the touch. The bed dipped beside him and suddenly a great weight settled over the small of his back and the crest of his ass where Lecter must be straddling him.

Something cold smoothed over his back and Will had to bite his cheek violently to keep from shrieking, but he kept his eyes squeezed shut all the while. When the first cut came Will didn't feel it until after the blade rose again and the burning sting set in. Will's head slid somewhere calm when the head spread through his back, and he relaxed all at once going limp under Lecter. Something soft brushed against the nape of his neck, maybe the ghost of a kiss, or fingers in his hair, and then another cut came mirroring the first.

One cut faded into the next and Will became nothing more than a tiny boat on an ocean of burning pain, the wet trickle of his blood sliding over his skin, and the wooden headboard beneath his hands. Lecter was creating an angular design, he could feel that much, some kind of inverted triangle that began at his shoulders and ended at his bottom-most ribs. The cuts over his bones hurt the worst, Will thought from the far away place in his head, the pain was more clear and left a deep ache behind. The other cuts, over the ropy muscle that ran along his spine, were more disparate, feathering away from the knife and sparking just under the skin.

As Lecter paused between cuts, Will rocked himself on the coverlet, seeking to ease the ache in his shoulder from keeping his arms out in front of his head for so long, and was surprised to discover that he was hard. He gripped the headboard tighter as the friction against his cock sent a bolt of pleasure up through his stomach. Somebody moaned in the background, Will belatedly realized it was himself. He flexed his hand around the smoothly varnished wood of the headboard, reassuring himself he was still holding on.

Lecter's hand, just this side of too hot, smoothed over Will's ribs and Will huffed out a gasp as the buzzing pain of his back and the electric contact of Lecter's hot hand became overwhelming. Lecter's hand drifted back down to his ass, his body weight shifting back onto Will's thighs. Will felt fingers kneading his ass and he twisted his head into the pillow determined not to open his eyes or let his hands uncurl, even though the pain of his back and Lecter's confident touch left him on edge, nearly desperate. He couldn't stop himself from lifting his hips up, but Lecter didn't seem to mind because a finger slipped down to stroke lightly over his hole. Will rolled his hips desperately, the need to chase sensation was the only thing in his deliciously empty head. Lecter stroked harder obligingly, and Will felt the edge of his thumb catch on the rim of his hole and he whimpered trying to somehow flex his back even further.

Abruptly, Lecter's hands left his ass and Will felt one wrap around the nape of his neck like a vice, pushing his face further into the pillow, cutting off his breathing. Will pushed down the instinct to kick and instead forced himself to relax into it. He lay still, sweaty palms sealed against the headboard, until black spots swam up between his eyes and eyelids and his head felt stuffed with cotton. Lips pressed against his neck, and then bit hard enough to pinch but not so hard as to break skin, and then Will was let up. He gasped for breath and couldn't stop himself from blinking twice.

More kisses showered down over his shoulders, just over where the cuts started, then Lecter's mouth slipped lower, sealed against one of his cuts, and sucked hard. Will shrieked, and really did kick, his legs drumming uselessly against the coverlet. Tears pricked against his eyes and slipped down his cheeks to pool in the pillow case. Lecter's body shifted off him and the bed on either side of Will dipped as all his weight shifted into his knees. Lecter grabbed his shoulders and flipped him, Will had to let go of the headboard and grab it again, and he screamed unrestrained when he landed on his bloody, shredded back. Lecter licked at his cheeks, and Will realized that Lecter was tasting his tears.

Teeth nipped at Will's lips and he craned his head trying for a proper kiss. Lecter's hand grabbed his throat, pressing against the big artery in his neck and Will's vision swam, but Lecter did give him his kiss. Just before Will passed out, Lecter's face swam into his vision. It was all but transparent and Will had to strain to make out the sharp points of his cheekbones and the arches of his brow bones, but the red smear of blood where a mouth would be was clear as day, a cruel red curve in the empty air.

Lecter eased up the grip on his throat and his face vanished leaving only the canopy above them. Lecter's lips moved against his again and Will tipped his head sideways and opened his jaw. He tasted spice, something savory and cloying (maybe cumin?) and his teeth tingled from the cold. Lecter's hands slipped up his sides, over his arms, and gently pulled his hands from the headboard. Will reached out for Lecter, but his hands met nothing, moving through where Lecter's body ought to be though the air was frigidly cold. Pulling his hands back, Will furrowed his brows and tried to think back the persistent throb from his back.

Will took a deep breath, and then it occurred to him to try again with his eyes closed. This time, Will's hands met solid flesh heavy with muscle and dusted with coarse hair. Will smoothed his hands over the body over him with an embarrassing desperation. He couldn't settle on any one place and passed reverently over round shoulder muscles, sleek biceps, a thin hard waist and narrow hips. Lecter seemed content to let him explore so Will dipped down to the knees on either side of him and slid upwards over corded thigh muscles (when had Lecter actually taken off his trousers?) until he felt the heavy cock between them. Lecter was gratifyingly hard, arcing up towards his stomach and beading pre-come.

With his eyes closed, Will wouldn't have guessed he was touching anything besides a flesh and blood human. Maybe a little chilly, but in the cool house it was all too easy to forget that if he opened his eyes there would be nothing there.

Will gave Lecter's cock a few perfunctory pumps and Lecter's hips gave the tiniest of bucks into his grip. Will grinned, biting his lip and feeling his cheeks flush hot. In retaliation, Lecter picked up the knife again and drew two parallel lines on either side of Will's abdomen. Will froze, breathing through the pain that pierced through his body from stomach to spine. Under his hands, Lecter's cock twitched and Will realized, again, just how aroused he was himself. Lecter raised his body off of Will and Will felt a finger smooth over his lips and heard the clatter of the knife being returned to the table. Lecter shifted down the bed and all at once Will's cock was encased by a mouth, the barest hint of teeth behind sleek lips and clever tongue.

Will moaned and Lecter took more of him down. Will keened in the very back of his throat, the sound choked off and pathetic to his own ears. Lecter bobbed his head and Will felt orgasm rushing up from some place behind the cuts in his back or maybe his tailbone. He tossed his head from side to side and fisted his hands in the sheets. Then, he felt the unmistakable sensation of swallowing, and knew he was lost. His body seized, feet curling and back arcing, pulling on the cuts painfully.

He fell to the bed completely limp, panting shimmering clouds into the dim air. Lecter gave a last lingering suck before pulling off. Will opened his eyes and craned his head up, watching the mirror, so he had a second's warning before Lecter flipped him onto his stomach again. Will went up to hands and knees, figuring what the doctor wanted, and looked coyly over his shoulder. Lecter's hand landed on his neck and he went down to knees and shoulders, feeling heavy and oversensitive from his orgasm. His hole squeezed compulsively as the stance exposed him to the air.

Will closed his eyes and focused on the feeling of his breathing returning to normal. He wondered if Lecter meant to put another lattice of cuts down his thighs. But, instead of the cold knife, a tongue smoothed over his hole. Will yelped in surprise, twisting his head around, but of course seeing nothing since he was too low to look into the mirror. The tongue licked in broad stripes over his hole, first slowly and then more insistently and Will's cock jerked painfully. The tongue licked harder and harder and Will slowly relaxed until, abruptly, the tongue slipped inside of him. Will first clenched in surprise but when the tongue was gone, he concentrated that much harder on relaxing until Lecter could lap into him again.

Lecter's mouth pressed over Will's hole and sucked lightly and Will, mortifyingly, squealed, his shoulders tensing and relaxing repeatedly. His back had dulled to a low roar and it was increasingly overwhelmed by the feeling of Lecter's mouth against his ass. Lecter pulled off, but immediately replaced his tongue with two fingers and Will's hips dropped an inch or two, his knees sliding almost uncomfortably wide. Lecter pushed his fingers into Will's ass and twisted with the same disturbingly low friction Will remembered from their first night.

Lecter's other hand slipped over his lowest cut, first lightly and then scratching shallowly, just enough to disrupt the healing skin and draw blood. Will heard an obscene sucking noise as Lecter licked his bloody finger clean.

Lecter's hands wrapped around his hips and slid his cock home into Will's ass, one smooth stroke that had Will gulping down air with his jaw dropped wide. Lecter curled over him, the heat like a heavy electric blanket, and began to thrust in earnest. His mouth dropped to Will's back and claimed another one of the shallow gashes, licking and sucking. Will was hard again and when he felt the blood rising to his back and being drawn into Lecter's mouth he knew a second orgasm was imminent.

The thrusts came harder and faster and Lecter's hand dropped to the bite mark Will had worked so hard to preserve. Will would never have considered his hip bone to be a particularly sensitive place, but the knowledge that Lecter had seen his bite mark, knew he had taken steps to keep it in his skin, and was claiming it as his own made Will's body flush hot and his ribs go heavy, and then he came again. Lecter sped up, and then went still, and

Will wondered just how, exactly, a ghost orgasmed. Will slipped to the side when Lecter pulled out, a boneless tangle of limbs on the four-poster bed.

Lecter draped over him for a moment, a comforting weight over his back. Will felt fingers carding through his curls, which were surely curling all the more adamantly for the sweat slipping down the side of his head. Will felt a smile tug at the corner of his lips without any conscious command from his brain. A large hand was stroking the side of his thigh, then Lecter rolled and disappeared from the bed. Will sat up, his chest tight with Lecter's absence. "Dr. Lecter?" He asked, looking around the room instinctively then turning to the mirror, he saw Lecter standing by the bed, still gloriously naked and made golden by the last little bit of candle still burning. Lecter was turned towards him, and twisted around so his back was to the nightstand and he was facing the mirror. He smiled, a shockingly gentle expression on his sharp features, and nodded towards the tube of anti-septic on the table.

Will lay down and shut his eyes, and felt a soothing touch rub something warm into the cuts in his abdomen. Will felt a gust of air beside him, then Lecter patted his side and Will rolled onto what he guessed was a towel on the coverlet. With so many more cuts on his back, Lecter took longer giving individual attention to each one of them, though he stopped now and again to press a soft kiss to Will's earlobe, his wrist, the dimple in the small of his back. When the last of the cuts was warming under the ointment, Will let his eyes slip closed and drifted into blissful sleep.

-x-

The next morning, Will woke feeling more rested than he could remember. His back felt like one huge bruise, but it was the pleasant constancy of a hand resting against his back. At some point, he had worked himself under the covers and Will shoved them aside, standing to stretch in the pale sunlight filtering in through the high windows. Then he shivered hard from head to toe. First things first, he thought, those windows were getting fixed.

The windows on the upper floor took all day to replace, and as the sun was slipping below the horizon and Will finished the last one in the guest bedrooms. He was tottering towards the stairs when a hand landed on his shoulder, and he couldn't stop his full body jerk of surprise. Cold air washed over his cheek in a pattern that reminded him of laughter. The hand slipped to his back, beneath where the cuts ended, and propelled him gently to Lecter's bedroom. Will's eyes drifted closed and he nearly fell asleep standing, and Lecter pulled his shirt over his head and pushed off his jeans like he was an outsized doll.

The covers had been drawn back and Will slid beneath them gratefully and began sliding towards sleep immediately. The bed dipped with Lecter's weight, and Will felt an arm slung over his shoulders and leg twist between his. He kept his eyes shut, twisted his head and pressed a kiss to where he best guessed Lecter's cheek was. Then his head dropped to the pillows and he passed into unconsciousness.

-x-

Will's blissful sleep was broken the next morning by a loud banging coming from downstairs. Rising, he padded downstairs and found one of the kitchen cabinets flapping against its frame by a disadvantageous air current. "No rest for the wicked," he said tiredly, and padded out for

his car for another load of window glass. The lower floors had taken more damage and Will was only a third of the way done as night fell, and the banging started up again. Frowning, and thoroughly sore from the hard labor and his healing back, Will grabbed a piece of tarp from his heap of tools and stalked towards the kitchen. He froze when he rounded the corner and found Bedelia standing in the kitchen.

She was dressed in dark clothing but her hair nearly glowed in the wan moonlight filtering through the leaves outside. “Will,” she said somberly, “what are you doing here?”

“Researching my thesis,” he replied his voice low and flat. He tossed the tarp to the floor and, after a longer pause, the staple gun after it.

“At eleven at night?” Bedelia asked, and though her voice was pitched politely her expression was forbidding.

“I’ve been working through his estate, no point going back home when I can just sleep here.”

“And where are you sleeping?” she countered, moving to the side to put more space between her and him as he passed into the kitchen, “I walked around the entire house, there’s no sleeping bag down.”

“Upstairs,” Will was rapidly running out of patience, all he wanted was to be left alone and she kept trying to keep him from his thesis, from the house. “It’s warmer up there.”

“Will, why don’t you come back to campus. This house isn’t safe. The police wouldn’t want you here,” Bedelia’s words were beseeching but all Will felt was threatened.

“Going to call the cops on me, Bedelia? For writing my thesis?” he asked her hardening his voice to stone.

“Do I need to?” she shot back.

The knife block rolled in the corner of his vision, going from laying on its side to upright. Bedelia went still watching it, but Will kept his gaze on her.

One of the knives, a smaller paring knife, shot out of the block, spinning in the air and thudding into the wall beside Bedelia. She screamed, and another larger steak knife slammed into the wall inches from where she curled away from the first knife.

“You’re just going to let him kill me, Will?” Bedelia demanded, her voice gone high but still full of anger and indignation.
“The knives fell,” Will told her tonelessly.

Bedelia dashed across the room and ducked through the broken window between the kitchen and the sitting room, straddling the window sill long enough to yell “he’s not good for you, Will!” before dropping into the hedges beneath. Will rushed to the window sill feeling hot, and sick, and restless.

“You don’t know anything! Not anything!” he shouted out the window into the darkness, but only silence replied.

Will pulled back from the window and went boneless, sinking to the chipping kitchen tile. He cursed, running his hands through his hair. “She can’t take me away, from this place, from you. She can’t.”

He heard the sound of footsteps on tile, and tilting his chin up saw Lecter’s broad shoulders outlined in the dark window. “I won’t let her,” Will told him, with finality. Lecter squeezed his shoulder.

End Notes

There are two more parts to go, please tell me if you liked this by leaving a kudo (or even a comment??)
Typos and structure and anything are fair game for criticism, and I'm this same name on tumblr if you'd prefer to comment anonymously.
Thank you all for reading my really super weird ghost story I hope you had fun.
(PS points to anyone who knows the reference to this one's title or the fancy new series it belongs to without google!)
(PPS please don't scar unless you're certain about safety and sterility, the human mouth is a horrifying bed of bacteria and knives are hard to really sterilize without an autoclave)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!